

Lectures Introductory
on the
Epistle
to the
ROMANS

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INTRODUCTORY LECTURES
ON
THE EPISTLES OF PAUL.

I.
ROMANS.

THE circumstances under which the epistle to the Romans was written gave occasion to the most thorough and comprehensive unfolding, not of the church, but of Christianity. No apostle had ever yet visited Rome. There was somewhat as yet lacking to the saints there; but even this was ordered of God to call forth from the Holy Ghost an epistle which more than any other approaches a complete treatise on the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, and especially as to righteousness.

Would we follow up the heights of heavenly truth, would we sound the depths of Christian experience, would we survey the workings of the Spirit of God in the Church, would we bow before the glories of the person of Christ, or learn His manifold offices, we must look elsewhere—in the writings of the New Testament no doubt, but elsewhere rather than here.

The condition of the Roman saints called for a setting forth of the gospel of God; but this object, in order to be rightly understood and appreciated, leads the apostle into a display of the condition of man. We

have God and man in presence, so to speak. Nothing can be more simple and essential. Although there is undoubtedly that profoundness which must accompany every revelation of God, and especially in connection with Christ as now manifested, still we have God adapting Himself to the very first wants of a renewed soul—nay, even to the wretchedness of souls without God, without any real knowledge either of themselves or of Him. Not, of course, that the Roman saints were in this condition; but that God, writing by the apostle to them, seizes the opportunity to lay bare man's state as well as His own grace.

From the very first we have these characteristics of the epistle disclosing themselves. The apostle writes with the full assertion of his own apostolic dignity, but as a servant also. "Paul, a bondman of Jesus Christ"—an apostle "called," not born, still less as educated or appointed of man, but an apostle "called," as he says—"separated unto the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets." The connection is fully owned with that which had been from God of old. No fresh revelations from God can nullify those which preceded them; but as the prophets looked onward to what was coming, so is the gospel already come, supported by the past. There is mutual confirmation. Nevertheless, what is is in nowise the same as what was or what will be. The past prepared the way, as it is said here, "which God had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, [here we have the great central object of God's gospel, even the person of Christ, God's Son,] which was made of the seed of David

according to the flesh" (ver. 3). This last relation was the direct subject of the prophetic testimony, and Jesus had come accordingly. He was the promised Messiah, born King of the Jews.

But there was far more in Jesus. He was "declared," says the apostle, "to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, ver. 4). It was the Son of God not merely as dealing with the powers of the earth, Jehovah's King on the holy hill of Zion, but after a far deeper manner. For, essentially associated as He is with the glory of God the Father, the full deliverance of souls from the realm of death was His also. In this too we have the blessed connection of the Spirit (here peculiarly designated, for special reasons, "the Spirit of holiness"). That same energy of the Holy Ghost which had displayed itself in Jesus, when He walked in holiness here below, was demonstrated in resurrection; and not merely in His own rising from the dead, but in raising such at any time no doubt, though most signally and triumphantly displayed in His own resurrection.

The bearing of this on the contents and main doctrine of the epistle will appear abundantly by-and-by. Let me refer in passing to a few points more in the introduction, in order to link them together with that which the Spirit was furnishing to the Roman saints, as well as to show the admirable perfectness of every word that inspiration has given us. I do not mean by this its truth merely, but its exquisite suitability; so that the opening address commences the theme in hand, and insinuates that particular line of truth which the Holy Spirit sees fit to pursue throughout. To this then the

apostle comes, after having spoken of the divine favour shown himself, both when a sinner, and now in his own special place of serving the Lord Jesus. "By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith." This was no question of legal obedience, although the law came from Jehovah. Paul's joy and boast were in the gospel of God. So therefore it addressed itself to the obedience of faith; not by this meaning practice, still less according to the measure of a man's duty, but that which is at the root of all practice—faith-obedience—obedience of heart and will, renewed by divine grace, which accepts the truth of God. To man this is the hardest of all obedience; but when once secured, it leads peacefully into the obedience of every day. If slurred over, as it too often is in souls, it invariably leaves practical obedience lame, and halt, and blind.

It was for this then that Paul describes himself as apostle. And as it is for obedience of faith, it was not in anywise restricted to the Jewish people—"among all nations, for his (Christ's) name: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ" (verses 5, 6). He loved even here at the threshold to show the breadth of God's grace. If he was called, so were they—he an apostle, they not apostles but saints; but still, for them as for him, all flowed out of the same mighty love of God. "To all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called saints" (ver. 7). To these then he wishes, as was his wont, the fresh flow of that source and stream of divine blessing which Christ has made to be household bread to us: "Grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 7). Then, from ver. 8, after thanking God through Jesus for their faith spoken

of everywhere, and telling them of his prayers for them, he briefly discloses the desire of his heart about them—his long-cherished hope according to the grace of the gospel to reach Rome—his confidence in the love of God that through him some spiritual gift would be imparted to them, that they might be established, and, according to the spirit of grace which filled his own heart, that he too might be comforted together with them “by the mutual faith both of you and me” (vv. 11, 12). There is nothing like the grace of God for producing the truest humility, the humility that not only descends to the lowest level of sinners to do them good, but which is itself the fruit of deliverance from that self-love which puffs itself or lowers others. Witness the common joy that grace gives an apostle with saints he had never seen, so that even he should be comforted as well as they by their mutual faith. He would not therefore have them ignorant how they had lain on his heart for a visit (ver. 13). He was debtor both to the Greeks and the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise; he was ready, as far as he was concerned, to preach the gospel to those that were at Rome also (ver. 14, 15). Even the saints there would have been all the better for the gospel. It was not merely “to those at Rome,” but “to *you* that be at Rome.” Thus it is a mistake to suppose that saints may not be benefited by a better understanding of the gospel, at least as Paul preached it. Accordingly he tells them now what reason he had to speak thus strongly, not of the more advanced truths, but of the good news. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (ver. 16).

Observe, the gospel is not simply remission of sins, nor is it only peace with God, but "the power of God unto salvation." Now I take this opportunity of pressing on all that are here to beware of contracted views of "salvation." Beware that you do not confound it with souls being quickened, or even brought into joy. Salvation supposes not this only, but a great deal more. There is hardly any phraseology that tends to more injury of souls in these matters than a loose way of talking of salvation. "At any rate he is a saved soul," we hear. "The man has not got anything like settled peace with God; perhaps he hardly knows his sins forgiven; but at least he is a saved soul." Here is an instance of what is so reprehensible. This is precisely what salvation does *not* mean; and I would strongly press it on all that hear me, more particularly on those that have to do with the work of the Lord, and of course ardently desire to labour intelligently; and this not alone for the conversion, but for the establishment and deliverance of souls. Nothing less, I am persuaded, than this full blessing is the line that God has given to those who have followed Christ without the camp, and who, having been set free from the contracted ways of men, desire to enter into the largeness and at the same time the profound wisdom of every word of God. Let us not stumble at the starting-point, but leave room for the due extent and depth of "salvation" in the gospel.

There is no need of dwelling now on "salvation" as employed in the Old Testament, and in some parts of the New, as the gospels and Revelation particularly, where it is used for deliverance in power or even providence and present things. I confine myself to its

doctrinal import, and the full Christian sense of the word ; and I maintain that salvation signifies that deliverance for the believer which is the full consequence of the mighty work of Christ, apprehended not, of course, necessarily according to all its depth in God's eyes, but at any rate applied to the soul in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not the awakening of conscience, however real ; neither is it the attraction of heart by the grace of Christ, however blessed this may be. We ought therefore to bear in mind, that if a soul be not brought into conscious deliverance as the fruit of divine teaching, and founded on the work of Christ, we are very far from presenting the gospel as the apostle Paul glories in it, and delights that it should go forth. "I am not ashamed," &c.

And he gives his reason : "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith ; as it is written, The just shall live by faith." That is, it is the power of God unto salvation, not because it is victory (which at the beginning of the soul's career would only give importance to man even if possible, which it is not), but because it is "the righteousness of God." It is not God seeking, or man bringing righteousness. In the gospel there is *revealed* God's righteousness. Thus the introduction opened with Christ's person, and closes with God's righteousness. The law demanded, but could never receive righteousness from man. Christ is come, and has changed all. God is revealing a righteousness of His own in the gospel. It is God who now makes known a righteousness *to* man, instead of looking for any *from* man. Undoubtedly there are fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, and God values them—I will not say from man, but from

His saints; but here it is what, according to the apostle, God has for man. It is for the saints to learn, of course; but it is that which goes out in its own force and necessary aim to the need of man—a divine righteousness, which justifies instead of condemning him who believes. It is “the power of God unto salvation.” It is for the lost, therefore; for they it is who need salvation; and it is to save—not merely to quicken, but to *save*; and this because in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed.

Hence it is, as he says, herein revealed “from faith,” or by faith. It is the same form of expression exactly as in the beginning of Romans v.—“being justified *by* faith” (ἐκ πίστεως). But besides this he adds “*to* faith.” The first of these phrases, “from faith,” excludes the law; the second, “to faith,” includes every one that has faith within the scope of God’s righteousness. Justification is not from works of law. The righteousness of God is revealed from *faith*; and consequently, if there be faith in any soul, to this it is revealed, to faith wherever it may be. Hence, therefore, it was in no way limited to any particular nation, such as those that had already been under the law and government of God. It was a message that went out from God to sinners as such. Let man be what he might, or where he might, God’s good news was for man. And to this agreed the testimony of the prophet: “The just shall live by faith” (not by law). Even where the law was, not by it but by faith the just lived. Did Gentiles believe? They too should live. Without faith there is neither justice nor life that God owns; where faith is, the rest will surely follow.

This accordingly leads the apostle into the earlier

portion of his great argument, and first of all in a preparatory way. Here we pass out of the introduction of the epistle. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (ver. 18). This is what made the gospel to be so sweet and precious, and, what is more, absolutely necessary, if he would escape certain and eternal ruin. There is no hope for man otherwise; for the gospel is not all that is now made known. Not only is God's righteousness revealed, but also His wrath. It is not said to be revealed in the gospel. The gospel means His glad tidings for man. The wrath of God could not possibly be glad tidings. It is true, it is needful for man to learn; but in nowise is it good news. There is then the solemn truth also of divine wrath. It is not yet executed. It is "revealed," and this too "from heaven." There is no question of a people on earth, and of God's wrath breaking out in one form or another against human evil in this life. The earth, or, at least, the Jewish nation, had been familiar with such dealings of God in times past. But now it is "the wrath of God from heaven;" and consequently it is in view of eternal things, and not of those that touch present life on the earth.

Hence, as God's wrath is revealed from heaven, it is against every form of impiety—"against all ungodliness." Besides this, which seems to be a most comprehensive expression for embracing every sort and degree of human iniquity, we have one very specifically named. It is against the "unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." To hold the truth in unrighteousness would be no security. *Alas!* we

know how this was in Israel, how it might be, and has been, in Christendom. God pronounces against the unrighteousness of such; for if the knowledge, however exact, of God's revealed mind was accompanied by no renewal of the heart, if it was without life towards God, all must be vain. Man is only so much the worse for knowing the truth, if he holds it ever so fast with unrighteousness. There are some that find a difficulty here, because the expression "to hold" means holding firmly. But it is quite possible for the unconverted to be tenacious of the truth, yet unrighteous in their ways; and so much the worse for them. Not thus does God deal with souls. If His grace attract, His truth humbles, and leaves no room for vain boasting and self-confidence. What He does is to pierce and penetrate the man's conscience. If one may so say, He thus holds the man, instead of letting the man presume that he is holding fast the truth. The inner man is dealt with, and searched through and through.

Nothing of this is intended in the class that is here brought before us. They are merely persons who plume themselves on their orthodoxy, but in a wholly unrenewed condition. Such men have never been wanting since the truth has shone on this world; still less are they now. But the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them pre-eminently. The judgments of God will fall on man as man, but the heaviest blows are reserved for Christendom. There the truth is held, and apparently with firmness too. This, however, will be put to the test by-and-by. But for the time it is held fast, though in unrighteousness. Thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against (not only the open ungodliness of men, but) the orthodox unright-

eousness of those that hold the truth in unrighteousness.

And this leads the apostle into the moral history of man—the proof both of his inexcusable guilt, and of his extreme need of redemption. He begins with the great epoch of the dispensations of God (that is, the ages since the flood). We cannot speak of the state of things before the flood as a dispensation. There was a most important trial of man in the person of Adam; but after this, what dispensation was there? What were the principles of it? No man can tell. The truth is, those are altogether mistaken who call it so. But after the flood man as such was put under certain conditions—the whole race. Man became the object, first, of general dealings of God under Noah; next, of His special ways in the calling of Abraham and of his family. And what led to the call of Abraham, of whom we hear much in the epistle to the Romans as elsewhere, was the departure of man into idolatry. Man despised at first the outward testimony of God, His eternal power and Godhead, in the creation above and around him (verses 19, 20). Moreover, He gave up the knowledge of God that had been handed down from father to son (ver. 21). The downfall of man, when he thus abandoned God, was most rapid and profound; and the Holy Spirit traces this solemnly to the end of chapter i. with no needless words, in a few energetic strokes summing up that which is abundantly confirmed (but in how different a manner!) by all that remains of the ancient world. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man,” &c. (verses 22–32.) Thus

corruption not only overspread morals, but became an integral part of the religion of men, and had thus a quasi-divine sanction. Hence the depravity of the heathen found little or no check from conscience, because it was bound up with all that took the shape of God before their mind. There was no part of heathenism, practically viewed now, so corrupting as that which had to do with the objects of its worship. Thus, the true God being lost, all was lost, and man's downward career becomes the most painful and humiliating object, unless it be, indeed, that which we have to feel where men, without renewal of heart, espouse in pride of mind the truth with nothing but unrighteousness.

In the beginning of chapter ii. we have man pretending to righteousness. Still, it is "man"—not yet exactly the Jew, but man—who had profited, it might be, by whatever the Jew had; at the least, by the workings of natural conscience. But natural conscience, although it may detect evil, never leads one into the inward possession and enjoyment of good—never brings the soul to God. Accordingly, in chapter ii. the Holy Spirit shows us man satisfying himself with pronouncing on what is right and wrong—moralizing for others, but nothing more. Now God must have reality in the man himself. The gospel, instead of treating this as a light matter, alone vindicates God in these eternal ways of His, in that which must be in him who stands in relationship with God. Hence therefore, the apostle, with divine wisdom, opens this to us before the blessed relief and deliverance which the gospel reveals to us. In the most solemn way he appeals to man with the demand, whether he thinks

that God will look complacently on that which barely judges another, but which allows the practice of evil in the man himself (ii. 1-3). Such moral judgments will, no doubt, be used to leave man without excuse; they can never suit or satisfy God.

Then the apostle introduces the ground, certainty, and character of God's judgment (verses 4-16). He "will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile."

It is not here a question of how a man is to be saved, but of God's indispensable moral judgment, which the gospel, instead of weakening, asserts according to the holiness and truth of God. It will be observed therefore, that in this connection the apostle shows the place both of conscience and of the law,—that God in judging will take into full consideration the circumstances and condition of every soul of man. At the same time he connects, in a singularly interesting manner, this disclosure of the principles of the eternal judgment of God with what he calls "my gospel." This also is a most important truth, my brethren, to bear in mind. The gospel at its height in no wise weakens but maintains the moral manifestation of what God is. The legal institutions were associated with temporal judgment. The gospel, as now revealed in the New Testament, has linked with it, though not contained in it, the revelation of divine wrath from heaven, and this, you will observe, according to Paul's

gospel. It is evident, therefore, that dispensational position will not suffice for God, who holds to His own unchangeable estimate of good and evil, and who judges the more stringently according to the measure of advantage possessed.

But thus the way is now clear for bringing the Jew into the discussion. "But if [for so it should be read] thou art named a Jew," &c. (ver. 17.) It was not merely that he had better light. He *had* this, of course, in a revelation that was from God; he had law; he had prophets; he had divine institutions. It was not merely better light in the conscience, which might be elsewhere, as is supposed in the early verses of our chapter; but the Jew's position was directly and unquestionably one of divine tests applied to man's estate. Alas! the Jew was none the better for this, unless there were the submission of his conscience to God. Increase of privileges can never avail without the soul's self-judgment before the mercy of God. Rather does it add to his guilt: such is man's evil state and will. Accordingly, in the end of the chapter, he shows that this is most true as applied to the moral judgment of the Jew; that none so much dishonoured God as wicked Jews, their own Scripture attesting it; that position went for nothing in such, while the lack of it would not annul the Gentile's righteousness, which would indeed condemn the more unfaithful Israel; in short, that one must be a Jew inwardly to avail, and circumcision be of the heart, in spirit, not in letter, whose praise is of God, and not of men.

The question then is raised in the beginning of chapter iii., If this be so, what is the superiority of the

Jew? Where lies the value of belonging to the circumcised people of God? The apostle allows this privilege to be great, specially in having the Scriptures, but turns the argument against the boasters. We need not here enter into the details; but on the surface we see how the apostle brings all down to that which is of the deepest interest to every soul. He deals with the Jew from his own Scripture (verses 9–19). Did the Jews take the ground of exclusively having that word of God—the law? Granted that it is so, at once and fully. To whom, then, did the law address itself? To those that were under it, to be sure. It pronounced on the Jew then. It was the boast of the Jews that the law spoke about them; that the Gentiles had no right to it, and were but presuming on what belonged to God's chosen people. The apostle applies this according to divine wisdom. Then your principle is your condemnation. What the law says, it speaks to those under it. What, then, is its voice? That there is none righteous, none that doeth good, none that understandeth. Of whom does it declare all this? Of the Jew by his own confession. Every mouth was stopped; the Jew by his own oracles, as the Gentile by their evident abominations, shown already. *All the world* was guilty before God.

Thus, having shown the Gentile in chapter i. manifestly wrong and hopelessly degraded to the last degree—having laid bare the moral diletantism of the philosophers, not one whit better in the sight of God, but rather the reverse—having shown the Jew overwhelmed by the condemnation of the divine oracles in which he chiefly boasted, without real righteousness, and so much the more guilty for his special privileges,

all now lies clear for bringing in the proper Christian message, the gospel of God. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets" (verses 20, 21).

Here, again, the apostle takes up what he had but announced in chapter i.—the righteousness of God. Let me call your attention again to its force. It is not the *mercy* of God. Many have contended that so it is, and to their own great loss, as well as to the weakening of the word of God. "Righteousness" never means mercy, not even the "righteousness of God." The meaning is not what was executed on Christ, but what is in virtue of it. Undoubtedly divine judgment fell on Him; but this is not "the righteousness of God," as the apostle employs it in any part of his writings any more than here, though we know there could be no such thing as God's righteousness justifying the believer, if Christ had not borne the judgment of God. The expression means that righteousness which God can afford to display because of Christ's atonement. In short, it is what the words say—"the righteousness of God," and this "by faith of Jesus Christ."

Hence it is wholly apart from the law, whilst witnessed to by the law and prophets; for the law with its types had looked onward to this new kind of righteousness; and the prophets had borne their testimony that it was at hand, but not then come. Now it was manifested, and not promised or predicted merely. Jesus had come and died; Jesus had been a propitiatory sacrifice; Jesus had borne the judgment of God because of the

sins He bore. The righteousness of God, then, could now go forth in virtue of His blood. God was not satisfied alone. There is satisfaction; but the work of Christ goes a great deal farther. Therein God is both vindicated and glorified. By the cross God has a deeper moral glory than ever—a glory that He thus acquired, if I may so say. He is, of course, the same absolutely perfect and unchangeable God of goodness; but His perfection has displayed itself in new and more glorious ways in Christ's death, in Him who humbled Himself, and was obedient even to the death of the cross.

God, therefore, having not the least hindrance to the manifestation of what He can be and is in merciful intervention on behalf of the worst of sinners, manifests it as His righteousness "by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (ver. 22). The former is the direction, and the latter the application. The direction is "unto all;" the application is, of course, only to "them that believe;" but it is to *all* them that believe. As far as persons are concerned, there is no hindrance; Jew or Gentile makes no difference, as is expressly said, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the [passing over or *præter*-mission, not] remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (verses 23–26). There is no simple mind that can evade the plain force of this last expression. The righteousness of God means that God is just, while at

the same time He justifies the believer in Christ Jesus. It is *His* righteousness, or, in other words, His perfect consistency with Himself, which is always involved in the notion of righteousness. He is consistent with Himself when He is justifying sinners, or, more strictly, all those who believe in Jesus. He can *meet* the sinner, but He *justifies* the believer; and in this, instead of trenching on His glory, there is a deeper revelation and maintenance of it than if there never had been sin or a sinner.

Horribly offensive as sin is to God, and inexcusable in the creature, it is sin which has given occasion to the astonishing display of divine righteousness in justifying believers. It is not a question of His mercy merely; for this weakens the truth immensely, and perverts its character wholly. The righteousness of God flows from His mercy, of course; but its character and basis is righteousness. Christ's work of redemption deserves that God should act as He does in the gospel. Observe again, it is not victory here; for that would give place to human pride. It is not a soul's overcoming its difficulties, but a sinner's submission to the righteousness of God. It is God Himself who, infinitely glorified in the Lord that expiated our sins by His one sacrifice, remits them now, not looking for our victory, nor as yet even in leading us on to victory, but by faith in Jesus and His blood. God is proved thus divinely consistent with Himself in Christ Jesus, whom He has set forth a mercy-seat through faith in His blood.

Accordingly the apostle says that boast and works are completely set aside by this principle which affirms faith, apart from deeds of law, to be the means of

relationship with God (verses 27, 28). Consequently the door is as open to the Gentile as to the Jew. The ground taken by a Jew for supposing God exclusively for Israel was, that they had the law, which was the measure of what God claimed from man; and this the Gentile had not. But such thoughts altogether vanish now, because, as the Gentile was unquestionably wicked and abominable, so from the law's express denunciation the Jew was universally guilty before God. Consequently all turned, not on what man should be for God, but what God can be and is, as revealed in the gospel, to man. This maintains both the glory and the moral universality of Him who will justify the circumcision by faith, not law, and the uncircumcision through their faith, if they believe the gospel. Nor does this in the slightest degree weaken the principle of law. On the contrary, the doctrine of faith establishes law as nothing else can; and for this simple reason, that if one who is guilty hopes to be saved spite of the broken law, it must be at the expense of the law that condemns his guilt; whereas the gospel shows no sparing of sin, but the most complete condemnation of it all, as charged on Him who shed His blood in atonement. The doctrine of faith therefore, which reposes on the cross, establishes law, instead of making it void, as every other principle must (verses 27-31).

But this is not the full extent of salvation. Accordingly we do not hear of salvation as such in chapter iii. There is laid down the most essential of all truths as a groundwork of salvation; namely, expiation. There is the vindication of God in His ways with the Old Testament believers. Their sins had been passed by.

He could not have remitted heretofore. This would not have been just. And the blessedness of the gospel is, that it is (not merely an exercise of mercy, but also) divinely just. It would not have been righteous in any sense to have remitted the sins, until they were actually borne by One who could and did suffer for them. But now they were; and thus God vindicated Himself perfectly as to the past. But this great work of Christ was not and could not be a mere vindication of God; and we may find it otherwise developed in various parts of Scripture, which I here mention by the way to show the point at which we are arrived. God's righteousness was now manifested as to the past sins He had not brought into judgment through His forbearance, and yet more conspicuously in the present time, when He displayed His justice in justifying the believer.

But this is not all; and the objection of the Jew gives occasion for the apostle to bring out a fuller display of what God is. Did they fall back on Abraham? "What shall we then say that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God." Did the Jew fancy that the gospel makes very light of Abraham, and of the then dealings of God? Not so, says the apostle. Abraham is the proof of the value of faith in justification before God. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. There was no law there or then; for Abraham died long before God spoke from Sinai. He believed God and His word, with special approval on God's part; and his faith was counted as righteousness (ver. 3). And this was powerfully corroborated by the testimony of another great name in Israel (David), in

Psalm xxxii. "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

In the same way the apostle disposes of all pretence on the score of ordinances, especially circumcision. Not only was Abraham justified without law, but apart from that great sign of mortification of the flesh. Although circumcision began with Abraham, manifestly it had nothing to do with his righteousness, and at best was but the seal of the righteousness of faith which he had in an uncircumcised state. It could not therefore be the source or means of his righteousness. All then that believe, though uncircumcised, might claim him as father, assured that righteousness will be reckoned to them too. And he is father of circumcision in the best sense, not to Jews, but to believing Gentiles. Thus the discussion of Abraham strengthens the case in behalf of the uncircumcised who believe, to the overthrow of the greatest boast of the Jew. The appeal to their own inspired account of Abraham turned into a proof of the consistency of God's ways in justifying by faith, and hence in justifying the uncircumcised no less than the circumcision.

But there is more than this in chapter iv. He takes up a third feature of Abraham's case; that is, the connection of the promise with resurrection. Here it is not merely the negation of law and of circumcision, but we have the positive side. Law works wrath because it provokes transgression; grace makes the promise sure to all the seed, not only because faith is open to the Gentile and Jew alike, but because God is looked to as a quickener of the dead. What gives glory to God like this? Abraham believed God when, according to nature, it was impossible for him or for Sarah to have a child. The quickening power of God therefore was here set forth, of course historically in a way connected with this life and a posterity on earth, but nevertheless a very just and true sign of God's power for the believer—the quickening energy of God after a still more blessed sort. And this leads us to see not only where there was an analogy with those who believe in a promised Saviour, but also to a weighty difference. And this lies in the fact that Abraham believed God before he had the son, being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. But we believe *on Him that raised up* Jesus our Lord from the dead. It is done already. It is not here believing on Jesus, but on God who has proved what He is to us in raising from among the dead Him who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification (verses 13–25).

This brings out a most emphatic truth and special side of Christianity. Christianity is not a system of promise, but rather of promise accomplished in Christ. Hence it is essentially founded on the gift not only of

a Saviour who would interpose, in the mercy of God, to bear our sins, but of One who is already revealed, and the work done and accepted, and this known in the fact that God Himself has interposed to raise Him from among the dead—a bright and momentous thing to press on souls, as indeed we find the apostles insisting on it throughout the Acts. Were it merely Romans iii. there could not be full peace with God as there is. One might know a most real clinging to Jesus; but this would not set the heart at ease with God. The soul may feel the blood of Jesus to be a yet deeper want; but this alone does not give peace with God. In such a condition what has been found in Jesus is too often misused to make a kind of difference, so to speak, between the Saviour on the one hand, and God on the other—ruinous always to the enjoyment of the full blessing of the gospel. Now there is no way in which God could lay a basis for peace with Himself more blessed than as He has done it. No longer does the question exist of requiring an expiation. That is the first necessity for the sinner with God. But we have had it fully in Romans iii. Now it is the positive power of God in raising up from the dead Him that was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justifying. The whole work is done.

The soul therefore now is represented for the first time as already justified and in possession of peace with God. This is a state of mind, and not the necessary or immediate fruit of Romans iii., but is based on the truth of Romans iv. as well as iii. There never can be solid peace with God without both. A soul may as truly, no doubt, be put into relationship with God—be

made very happy, it may be ; but it is not what Scripture calls "peace with God." Therefore it is here for the first time that we find salvation spoken of in the grand results that are now brought before us in chapter v. 1-11. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is entrance into favour, and nothing but favour. The believer is not put under law, you will observe, but under grace, which is the precise reverse of law. The soul is brought into peace with God, as it finds its standing in the grace of God, and, more than that, rejoices in hope of the glory of God. Such is the doctrine and the fact. It is not merely a call then ; but as we have by our Lord Jesus Christ our access into the favour wherein we stand, so there is positive boasting in the hope of the glory of God. For it may have been noticed from chapter iii. to chapter v., that nothing but fitness for the glory of God will do now. It is not a question of creature-standing. This passed away with man when he sinned. Now that God has revealed Himself in the gospel, it is not what will suit man on earth, but what is worthy of the presence of the glory of God. Nevertheless the apostle does not expressly mention heaven here. This was not suitable to the character of the epistle ; but the glory of God he does. We all know where it is and must be for the Christian.

The consequences are thus pursued ; first, the general place of the believer now, in all respects, in relation to the past, the present, and the future. His pathway follows ; and he shows that the very troubles of the road become a distinct matter of boast. This was not a direct and intrinsic effect, of course, but the result of spiritual dealing for the soul. It was the Lord giving

us the profit of sorrow, and ourselves bowing to the way and end of God in it, so that the result of tribulation should be rich and fruitful experience.

Then there is another and crowning part of the blessing: "And not only so, but also boasting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." It is not only a blessing in its own direct character, or in indirect though real effects, but the Giver Himself is our joy, and boast, and glory. The consequences spiritually are blessed to the soul; how much more is it to reach the source from which all flows! This, accordingly, is the essential spring of worship. The fruits of it are not expanded here; but, in point of fact, to joy in God is necessarily that which makes praise and adoration to be the simple and spontaneous exercise of the heart. In heaven it will fill us perfectly; but there is no more perfect joy there, nor anything higher, if so high, in this epistle.

At this point we enter upon a most important part of the epistle, on which we must dwell for a little. It is no longer a question of man's guilt, but of his nature. Hence the apostle does not, as in the early chapters of this epistle, take up our sins, except as proofs and symptoms of sin. Accordingly, for the first time, the Spirit of God from chapter v. 12 traces the nature of man to the head of the race. This brings in the contrast with the other Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we have here not as One bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, but as the spring and chief of a new family. Hence, as is shown later in the chapter, Adam is a head characterized by dis-

obedience, who brought in death, the just penalty of sin; as on the other hand we have Him of whom he was the type, Christ, the obedient man, who has brought in righteousness, and this after a singularly blessed sort and style—"justification of life." Of it nothing has been heard till now. We have had justification, both by blood and also in virtue of Christ's resurrection. But "justification of life" goes farther, though involved in the latter, than the end of Romans iv.; for now we learn that in the gospel there is not only a dealing with the guilt of those that are addressed in it; there is also a mighty work of God in the presenting the man in a new place before God, and in fact, too, for his faith, clearing him from all the consequences in which he finds himself as a man in the flesh here below.

It is here that you will find a great failure of Christendom as to this. Not that any part of the truth has escaped: it is the fatal brand of that "great house" that even the most elementary truth suffers the deepest injury; but as to this truth, it seems unknown altogether. I hope that brethren in Christ will bear with me if I press on them the importance of taking good heed to it that their souls are thoroughly grounded in this, the proper place of the Christian by Christ's death and resurrection. It must not be assumed too readily. There is a disposition continually to imagine that what is frequently spoken of must be understood; but experience will soon show that this is not the case. Even those that seek a place of separation to the Lord outside that which is now hurrying on souls to destruction are, nevertheless, deeply affected by the condition of that Christendom in which we find ourselves.

Here, then, it is not a question at all of pardon or remission. First of all the apostle points out that death has come in, and that this was no consequence of law, but before it. Sin was in the world between Adam and Moses, when the law was not. This clearly takes in man, it will be observed; and this is his grand point now. The contrast of Christ with Adam takes in man universally as well as the Christian; and man in sin, alas! was true, accordingly, before the law, right through the law, and ever since the law. The apostle is therefore plainly in presence of the broadest possible grounds of comparison, though we shall find more too.

But the Jew might argue that it was an unjust thing in principle—this gospel, these tidings of which the apostle was so full; for why should one man affect many, yea, all? “Not so,” replies the apostle. Why should this be so strange and incredible to you? for on your own showing, according to that word to which we all bow, you must admit that one man’s sin brought in universal moral ruin and death. Proud as you may be of that which distinguishes you, it is hard to make sin and death peculiar to you, nor can you connect them even with the law particularly: the race of man is in question, and not Israel alone. There is nothing that proves this so convincingly as the book of Genesis; and the apostle, by the Spirit of God, calmly but triumphantly summons the Jewish Scriptures to demonstrate that which the Jews were so strenuously denying. Their own Scriptures maintained, as nothing else could, that all the wretchedness which is now found in the world, and the condemnation which hangs over the race, is the fruit of one man, and indeed of one act.

Now, if it was righteous in God (and who will gainsay it?) to deal with the whole posterity of Adam as involved in death because of one, their common father, who could deny the consistency of one man's saving? who would defraud God of that which He delights in—the blessedness of bringing in deliverance by that One man, of whom Adam was the image? Accordingly, then, he confronts the unquestionable truth, admitted by every Israelite, of the universal havoc by one man everywhere with the One man who has brought in (*not* pardon only, but, as we shall find) eternal life and liberty—liberty now in the free gift of life, but a liberty that will never cease for the soul's enjoyment until it has embraced the very body that still groans, and this because of the Holy Ghost who dwells in it.

Here, then, it is a comparison of the two great heads—Adam and Christ, and the immeasurable superiority of the second man is shown. That is, it is not merely pardon of past sins, but deliverance from *sin*, and in due time from all its consequences. The apostle has come now to the nature. This is the essential point. It is the thing which troubles a renewed conscientious soul above all, because of his surprise at finding the deep evil of the flesh and its mind after having proved the great grace of God in the gift of Christ. If I am thus pitied of God, if so truly and completely a justified man, if I am really an object of God's eternal favour, how can I have such a sense of continual evil? why am I still under bondage and misery from the constant evil of my nature, over which I seem to have no power whatever? Has God then no delivering power from this? The answer is found in this portion of our epistle (that is, from the middle of chapter v).

Having shown first, then, the sources and the character of the blessing in general as far as regards deliverance, the apostle sums up the result in the end of the chapter: "That as sin hath reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life," the point being justification of life now through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is applied in the two chapters that follow. There are two things that might make insuperable difficulty: the one is the obstacle of sin in the nature to practical holiness; the other is the provocation and condemnation of the law. Now the doctrine which we saw asserted in the latter part of chapter v. is applied to both. First, as to practical holiness, it is not merely that Christ has died for my sins, but that even in the initiatory act of baptism the truth set forth there is that *I am* dead. It is not, as in Ephesians ii., dead in sins, which would be nothing to the purpose. This is all perfectly true—true of a Jew as of a pagan—true of any unrenewed man that never heard of a Saviour. But what is testified by Christian baptism is Christ's death. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized unto his death?" Thereby is identification with *His* death. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." The man who, being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, or Christian baptism, would assert any license to sin because it is in his nature, as if it were therefore an inevitable necessity, denies the real and evident meaning of his baptism. That act

denoted not even the washing away of our sins by the blood of Jesus, which would not apply to the case, nor in any adequate way meet the question of nature. What baptism sets forth is more than that, and is justly found, not in Romans iii., but in chapter vi. There is no inconsistency in Ananias's word to the apostle Paul—"wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." There is water as well as blood, and to that, not to this, the washing here refers. But there is more, which Paul afterwards insisted on. That was *said to* Paul, rather than what was *taught by* Paul. What the apostle had given him in fulness was the great truth, however fundamental it may be, that I am entitled, and even called on in the name of the Lord Jesus, to know that I am dead to sin; not that I must die, but that I *am* dead—that my baptism means nothing less than this, and is shorn of its most emphatic point if limited merely to Christ's dying for my sins. It is not so alone; but in His death, unto which I am baptized, I am *dead to sin*. And "how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" Hence, then, we find that the whole chapter is founded on this truth. "Shall we sin," says he, proceeding yet farther (ver. 15), "because we are not under the law, but under grace?" This were indeed to deny the value of His death, and of that newness of life we have in Him risen, and a return to bondage of the worst description.

In chapter vii. we have the subject of the law discussed for practice as well as in principle, and there again meet with the same weapon of tried and unfailing temper. It is no longer blood, but death—Christ's death and resurrection. The figure of the relationship

of husband and wife is introduced in order to make the matter plain. Death, and nothing short of it, rightly dissolves the bond. We accordingly are dead, says he, to the law; not (as no doubt almost all of us know) that the law dies, but that we are dead to the law in the death of Christ. Compare verse 6 (where the margin, not the text, is substantially correct) with verse 4. Such is the principle. The rest of the chapter (7-25) is an instructive episode, in which the impotence and the misery of the renewed mind which attempts practice under law are fully argued out, till deliverance (not pardon) is found in Christ.

Thus the latter portion of the chapter is not doctrine exactly, but the proof of the difficulties of a soul who has not realised death to the law by the body of Christ. Did this seem to treat the law that condemned as an evil thing? Not so, says the apostle; it is because of the evil of the nature, not of the law. The law never delivers; it condemns and kills us. It was meant to make sin exceeding sinful. Hence, what he is here discussing is not remission of sins, but deliverance from sin. No wonder, if souls confound the two things together, that they never know deliverance in practice. Conscious deliverance, to be solid according to God, must be in the line of His truth. In vain will you preach Romans iii., or even iv. alone, for souls to know themselves consciously and holily set free.

From verse 14 there is an advance. There we find Christian knowledge as to the matter introduced; but still it is the knowledge of one who is not in this state pronouncing on one who is. You must carefully guard against the notion of its being a question of Paul's own experience, because he says, "*I had not known,*"

"I was alive," &c. There is no good reason for such an assumption, but much against it. It might be more or less any man's lot to learn. It is not meant that Paul knew nothing of this; but that the ground of inference, and the general theory built up, are alike mistaken. We have Paul informing us that he transfers sometimes in a figure to himself that which was in no wise necessarily his own experience, and perhaps had not been so at any time. But this may be comparatively a light question. The great point is to note the true picture given us of a soul quickened, but labouring and miserable under law, not at all consciously delivered. The last verses of the chapter, however, bring in the deliverance—not yet the fulness of it, but the hinge, so to speak. The discovery is made that the source of the internal misery was that the mind, though renewed, was occupied with the law as a means of dealing with flesh. Hence the very fact of being renewed makes one sensible of a far more intense misery than ever, while there is no power until the soul looks right outside self to Him who is dead and risen, who has anticipated the difficulty, and alone gives the full answer to all wants.

Chapter viii. displays this comforting truth in its fulness. From the first verse we have the application of the dead and risen Christ to the soul, till in verse 11 we see the power of the Holy Ghost, which brings the soul into this liberty now, applied by-and-by to the body, when there will be the complete deliverance. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in

that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." A wondrous way, but most blessed! And there (for such was the point) it was the complete condemnation of this evil thing, the nature in its present state, so as, nevertheless, to set the believer as before God's judgment free from itself as well as its consequences. This God has wrought in Christ. It is not in any degree settled as to itself by His blood. The shedding of His blood was absolutely necessary: without that precious expiation all else had been vain and impossible. But there is much more in Christ than that to which too many souls restrict themselves, not less to their own loss than to His dishonour. God has condemned the flesh. And here it may be repeated that it is no question of pardoning the sinner, but of condemning the fallen nature; and this so as to give the soul both power and a righteous immunity from all internal anguish about it. For the truth is that God has in Christ condemned sin, and this for sin definitely; so that He has nothing more to do in condemnation of that root of evil. What a title, then, God gives me now in beholding Christ, no longer dead but risen, to have it settled before my soul that I am in Him as He now is, where all questions are closed in peace and joy! For what remains unsolved by and in Christ? Once it was far otherwise. Before the cross there hung out the gravest question that ever was raised, and it needed settlement in this world; but in Christ sin is for ever abolished for the believer; and this not only in respect of what He has done, but in what He is. Till the cross, well might a converted soul be found groaning in misery at each fresh discovery

of evil in himself. But now to faith all this is gone—not lightly, but truly—in the sight of God; so that he may live on a Saviour that is risen from the dead as his new life.

Accordingly Romans viii. pursues in the most practical manner the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. First of all, the groundwork of it is laid in the first four verses, the last of them leading into every-day walk. And it is well for those ignorant of it to know that here, in verse 4, the apostle speaks first of “walking, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The latter clause in the first verse of the authorised version mars the sense. In the fourth verse this could not be absent; in the first verse it ought not to be present. Thus the deliverance is not merely for the joy of the soul, but also for strength in our walking after the Spirit, who has given and found a nature in which He delights, communicating withal His own delight in Christ, and making obedience to be the joyful service of the believer. The believer, therefore, unwittingly though really, dishonours the Saviour, if he be content to walk short of this standard and power; he is entitled and called to walk according to his place, and in the confidence of his deliverance in Christ Jesus before God.

Then the domains of flesh and Spirit are brought before us: the one characterized by sin and death practically now; the other by life, righteousness, and peace, which is, as we saw, to be crowned finally by the resurrection of these bodies of ours. The Holy Ghost, who now gives the soul its consciousness of deliverance from its place in Christ, is also the witness that the body too, the mortal body, shall be delivered in its time.

"If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by [or because of] his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Next, he enters upon another branch of the truth—the Spirit not as a condition contrasted with flesh (these two, as we know, being always contrasted in Scripture), but as a power, a divine person that dwells in and bears His witness to the believer. His witness to our spirit is this,—that we are children of God. But if children, we are His heirs. This accordingly leads, as connected with the deliverance of the body, to the inheritance we are to possess. The extent is what God Himself, so to speak, possesses—the universe of God, whatever will be under Christ: and what will not? As He has made all, so He is heir of all. We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Hence the action of the Spirit of God in a double point of view comes before us. As He is the spring of our joy, He is the power of sympathy in our sorrows, and the believer knows both. The faith of Christ has brought divine joy into his soul; but, in point of fact, he is traversing a world of infirmity, suffering, and grief. Wonderful to think the Spirit of God associates Himself with us in it all, deigning to give us divine feelings even in our poor and narrow hearts. This occupies the central part of the chapter, which then closes with the unfailing and faithful power of God for us in all our experiences here below. As He has given us through the blood of Jesus full remission, as we shall be saved by this life, as He has made us know even now nothing short of present conscious deliverance from every whit of evil that belongs to our very

nature, as we have the Spirit the earnest of the glory to which we are destined, as we are the vessels of gracious sorrow in the midst of that from which we are not yet delivered but shall be, so now we have the certainty that, whatever betide, God is for us, and that nothing shall separate us from His love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Then, in chapters ix.—xi., the apostle handles a difficulty serious to any mind, especially to the Jew, who might readily feel that all this display of grace in Christ to the Gentile as much as to the Jew by the gospel seems to make very cheap the distinctive place of Israel as given of God. If the good news of God goes out to man, entirely blotting out the difference between a Jew and a Gentile, what becomes of His special promises to Abraham and to his seed? What about His word passed and sworn to the fathers? The apostle shows them with astonishing force at the starting-point that he was far from slighting their privileges. He lays down such a summary as no Jew ever gave since they were a nation. He brings out the peculiar glories of Israel according to the depth of the gospel as he knew and preached it; at least, of His person who is the object of faith now revealed. Far from denying or obscuring what they boasted of, he goes beyond them—"Who are Israelites," says he, "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever." Here was the very truth that every

Jew, as such, denied. What blindness! *Their* crowning glory was precisely what they would not hear of. What glory so rich as that of the Christ Himself duly appreciated? He was God over all blessed for ever, as well as their Messiah. Him who came in humiliation, according to their prophets, they might despise; but it was vain to deny that the same prophets bore witness to His divine glory. He was Emmanuel, yea, the Jehovah, God of Israel. Thus then, if Paul gave his own sense of Jewish privileges, there was no unbelieving Jew that rose up to his estimate of them.

But now, to meet the question that was raised, they pleaded the distinguishing promises to Israel. Upon what ground? Because they were sons of Abraham. But how, argues he, could this stand, seeing that Abraham had another son, just as much his child as Isaac? What did they say to Ishmaelites as joint-heirs? They would not hear of it. No, they cry, it is in Isaac's seed that the Jew was called. Yes, but this is another principle. If *in Isaac* only, it is a question of the seed, not that was born, but that was called. Consequently the call of God, and not the birth simply, makes the real difference. Did they venture to plead that it must be not only the same father, but the same mother? The answer is, that this will not do one whit better; for when we come down to the next generation, it is apparent that the two sons of Isaac were sons of the same mother; nay, they were twins. What could be conceived closer or more even than this? Surely if equal birth-tie could ensure community of blessing—if a charter from God depended on being sprung from the same father and mother, there was no case so strong, no claim so evident, as that of Esau to take the same

rights as Jacob. Why would they not allow such a pretension? Was it not sure and evident that Israel could not take the promise on the ground of mere connection after the flesh? Birthright from the same father would let in Ishmael on the one hand, as from both parents it would secure the title of Esau on the other. Clearly, then, such ground is untenable. In point of fact, as he had hinted before, their true tenure was the call of God, who was free, if He pleased, to bring in other people. It became simply a question whether, in fact, God did call Gentiles, or whether He had revealed such intentions.

But he meets their proud exclusiveness in another way. He shows that, on the responsible ground of being His nation, they were wholly ruined. If the first book in the Bible showed that it was only the call of God that made Israel what they were, its second book as clearly proved that all was over with the called people, had it not been for the mercy of God. They set up the golden calf, and thus cast off the true God, their God, even in the desert. Did the call of God, then, go out to Gentiles? Has He mercy only for guilty Israel? Is there no call, no mercy, of God for any besides?

Hereupon he enters upon the direct proofs, and first cites Hosea as a witness. That early prophet tells Israel, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi were of awful import for Israel; but, in presence of circumstances so disastrous, there should be not merely a people but sons of the living God, and then should Judah and Israel be gathered as one people under one head. The application of this was more

evident to the Gentile than to the Jew. Compare Peter's use in his first epistle, chap. ii. 10. Finally he brings in Isaiah, showing that, far from retaining their blessing as an unbroken people, a remnant alone would be saved. Thus one could not fail to see these two weighty inferences: the bringing in to be God's sons of those that had not been His people, and the judgment and destruction of the great mass of His undoubted people. Of these only a remnant would be saved. On both sides therefore the apostle is meeting the grand points he had at heart to demonstrate from their own Scriptures.

For all this, as he presses further, there was the weightiest reason possible. God is gracious, but holy; He is faithful, but righteous. The apostle refers to Isaiah to show that God would "lay in Zion a stumbling-stone." It is *in Zion* that He lays it. It is not among the Gentiles, but in the honoured centre of the polity of Israel. There would be found a stumbling-stone there. What was to be the stumbling-stone? Of course, it could hardly be the law: that was the boast of Israel. What was it? There could be but one satisfactory answer. The stumbling-stone was their despised and rejected Messiah. This was the key to their difficulties—this alone, and fully explains their coming ruin as well as God's solemn warnings.

In the next chapter (x.) he carries on the subject, showing in the most touching manner his affection for the people. He at the same time unfolds the essential difference between the righteousness of faith and that of law. He takes their own books, and proves from one of them (Deuteronomy) that in the ruin of Israel the

resource is not going into the depths, nor going up to heaven. Christ indeed did both; and so the word was nigh them, in their mouth and in their heart. It is not *doing*, but *believing*; therefore it is what is proclaimed to them, and what they receive and believe. Along with this he gathers testimonies from more than one prophet. He quotes from Joel, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. He quotes also from Isaiah—"Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." And mark the force of it—"Whosoever." The believer, whosoever he might be, should not be ashamed. Was it possible to limit this to Israel? But more than this—"Whosoever shall call." There is the double prophecy. Whosoever believed should not be ashamed; whosoever called should be saved. In both parts, as it may be observed, the door is opened to the Gentile.

But then again he intimates that the nature of the gospel is involved in the publishing of the glad tidings. It is not God having an earthly centre, and the peoples coming up to worship the Lord in Jerusalem. It is the going forth of His richest blessing. And where? How far? To the limits of the holy land? Far beyond. Psalm xix. is used in the most beautiful manner to insinuate that the limits are the world. Just as the sun in the heavens is not for one people or land alone, no more is the gospel. There is no language where their voice is not heard. "Yea verily, their sound went forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." The gospel goes forth universally. Jewish pretensions were therefore disposed of; not here by new and fuller revelations, but by this divinely skilful employment of their own Old Testament Scriptures.

Finally he comes to two other witnesses; as from the Psalms, so now from the law and the prophets. The first is Moses himself. Moses saith, "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people," &c. How could the Jews say that this meant themselves? On the contrary, it was the Jew provoked by the Gentiles—"By them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you." Did they deny that *they* were a foolish nation? Be it so then; it was a foolish nation by which Moses declared they should be angered. But this does not content the apostle, or rather the Spirit of God; for he goes on to point out that Isaiah "is very bold" in a similar way; that is, there is no concealing the truth of the matter. Isaiah says: "I was found of them who sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." The Jews were the last in the world to take such ground as this. It was undeniable that the Gentiles did not seek the Lord, nor ask after Him; and the prophet says that Jehovah was found of them that sought Him not, and was made manifest to them that asked not after Him. Nor is there only the manifest call of the Gentiles in this, but with no less clearness there is the rejection, at any rate for a time, of proud Israel. "But unto Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

Thus the proof was complete. The Gentiles—the despised heathen—were to be brought in; the self-satisfied Jews are left behind, justly and beyond question, if they believed the law and the prophets.

But did this satisfy the apostle? It was undoubtedly enough for present purposes. The past history of

Israel was sketched in Romans ix.; the present more immediately is before us in chapter x. The future must be brought in by the grace of God; and this he accordingly gives us at the close of chapter xi. First, he raises the question, "Has God cast away his people?" Let it not be! Was he not himself, says Paul, a proof to the contrary? Then he enlarges, and points out that there is a remnant of grace in the worst of times. If God had absolutely cast away His people, would there be such mercy? There would be no remnant if justice took its course. The remnant proves, then, that even under judgment the rejection of Israel is not complete, but rather a pledge of future favour. This is the first ground.

The second plea is not that the rejection of Israel is only partial, however extensive, but that it is also temporary, and not definitive. This is to fall back on a principle he had already used. God was rather provoking Israel to jealousy by the call of the Gentiles. But if it were so, He had not done with them. Thus the first argument shows that the rejection was not total; the second, that it was but for a season.

But there is a third. Following up with the teaching of the olive-tree, he carries out the same thought of a remnant that abides on their own stock, and points to a re-instatement of the nation. And I would just observe by the way, that the Gentile cry that no Jew ever accepts the gospel in truth is a falsehood. Israel is indeed the only people of whom there is always a portion that believe. Time was when none of the English, nor French, nor of any other nation believed in the Saviour. There never was an hour since Israel's existence as a nation that God has not had His remnant

of them. Such has been their singular fruit of promise; such even in the midst of all their misery it is at present. And as that little remnant is ever sustained by the grace of God, it is the standing pledge of their final blessedness through His mercy, whereon the apostle breaks out into raptures of thanksgiving to God. The day hastens when the Redeemer shall come to Zion. He shall come, says one Testament, *out of* Zion. He shall come *to* Zion, says the other. In both Old and New it is the same substantial testimony. Thither He shall come, and thence go forth. He shall own that once glorious seat of royalty in Israel. Zion shall yet behold her mighty, divine, but once despised Deliverer; and when He thus comes, there will be a deliverance suited to His glory. All Israel shall be saved. God, therefore, had not cast off His people, but was employing the interval of their slip from their place, in consequence of their rejection of Christ, to call the Gentiles in sovereign mercy, after which Israel as a whole should be saved. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever."

The rest of the epistle takes up the practical consequences of the great doctrine of God's righteousness, which had been now shown to be supported by, and in no wise inconsistent with, His promises to Israel. The

whole history of Israel, past, present, and future, falls in with, although quite distinct from, that which he had been expounding. Here I shall be very brief.

Chapter xii. looks at the mutual duties of the saints. Chapter xiii. urges their duties towards what was outside them, more particularly to the powers that be, but also to men in general. Love is the great debt that we owe, which never can be paid, but which we should always be paying. The chapter closes with the day of the Lord in its practical force on the Christian walk. In chapter xiv. and the beginning of xv. we have the delicate theme of Christian forbearance in its limits and largeness. The weak are not to judge the strong, and the strong are not to despise the weak. These things are matters of conscience, and depend much for their solution on the degree to which souls have attained. The subject terminates with the grand truth which must never be obscured by details—that we are to receive one another, as Christ has received us, to the glory of God. In the rest of chapter xv. the apostle dwells on the extent of his apostleship, renews his expression of the thought and hope of visiting Rome, and at the same time shows how well he remembered the need of the poor at Jerusalem. Chapter xvi. brings before us in the most instructive and interesting manner the links that grace practically forms and maintains between the saints of God. Though he had never visited Rome, many of them were known personally. It is exquisite—the delicate love with which he singles out distinctive features in each of the saints, men and women, that come before him. Would that the Lord would give us hearts to remember, as well as eyes to see, according to His own grace! Then follows a warn-

ing against those who bring in stumbling-blocks and offences. There is evil at work, and grace does not close the eye to danger; at the same time it is never under the pressure of the enemy, and there is the fullest confidence that the God of peace will break the power of Satan under the feet of the saints shortly.

Last of all, the apostle links up this fundamental treatise of divine righteousness in its doctrine, its dispensational bearings, and its exhortations to the walk of Christians, with higher truth, which it would not have been suitable then to bring out; for grace considers the state and the need of the saints. True ministry gives out not merely truth, but *suited* truth to the saints. At the same time the apostle does allude to that mystery which was not yet divulged—at least, in this epistle; but he points from the foundations of eternal truth to those heavenly heights that were reserved for other communications in due time.